

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-08 AID-05 ACDA-12
MCT-01 HA-05 /121 W
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P 161554Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 510
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
CINCPAC
CINCNAVEUR
COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANTANANARIVO 849

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, CN, US
SUBJ: COMMENTS ON COUP D' ETATE IN COMOROS

REF: 77 ANT 1504

1. WE HAVE NO FACTUAL INFORMATION TO ADD TO WIRE SERVICE COVERAGE
OF THIS EVENT AND NOTE THAT EVEN THE AFP AND REUTERS ACCOUNTS
APPEAR TO BE BASED SOLELY ON BROADCASTS BY RADIO COMOROS.

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2. ACCORDING TO THE WIRE STORIES WE HAVE SEEN, NOTHING HAS
BEEN SAID ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY BY THE NEW RULERS EXCEPT FOR
AN OPEN INVITATION TO ALL FOREIGNERS WHO WANT TO WORK IN COMOROS
TO FEEL FREE TO COME THERE. OVERTURN OF ALI SOILIH REGIME SEEMS
TO HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED BY DISLIKE FOR HIS INTERNAL POLICIES AND, IF
OFFICIAL CASUALTY FIGURES ARE TO BE BELIEVED, WAS WIDELY SUPPORTED
BY POPULATION. MODERATION SEEMS TO BE KEYNOTE, WITH APPEALS TO

MEMBERS OF FORMER REGIME TO COOPERATE AND MAINTENANCE IN PLACE OF MINISTER OF INTERIOR. HOWEVER, THERE IS SOME VINDICTIVENESS EVIDENT TOWARD ALI SOILIH PERSONALLY AND THE POLICIES AND ELEMENTS MOST CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH HIM. THUS THE YOUNG MEMBERS OF THE FORMER NATIONAL POPULAR COMMITTEE ARE UNDER GUARD, MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN COUP ARE INVITED TO TURN IN ARMS, EQUIPMENT, AND UNIFORMS, AND ALI SOILIH HIMSELF IS BEING CALLED TO ACCOUNT FOR HIS EXPENDITURES OF FUNDS SUPPOSEDLY ALLOCATED FOR RELIEF OF REFUGEES FROM 1976 MAJUNGA MASSACRES. RETURN TO NORMALCY IS TO BE HIGHLIGHTED BY RESTORATION OF BUREAUCRACY LARGELY DISBANDED BY ALI SOILIH, AND A NEW CONSTITUTION.

3. ALI SOILIH'S POLICIES AND ACTIONS ON RELIGIOUS MATTERS AND WITH REGARD TO THE OLDER ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION MAY HAVE BEEN THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS BRINGING ABOUT THIS COUP. ALTHOUGH ALI SOILIH'S OWN CONSTITUTION PROVIDED FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE MOSQUES WERE WELL FREQUENTED DURING HIS RULE, CONTRARY TO SOME RADIO REPORTS I HAVE HEARD, HIS POLICIES AND ACTIONS GREATLY REDUCED THE INFLUENCE OF THE MOSLEM CLERGY IN THE DAILY LIFE OF THE VILLAGES AND TRIED TO SUPPLANT IT WITH THE INFLUENCE OF THE YOUNG POPULAR COMMITTEES. VEILS WERE PROSCRIBED. IN THE VERY TRA-

DITIONALLY MOSLEM COMOROS, THESE WERE PRETTY DRASTIC STEPS. THIS DIVISION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS ELDERS AND REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH WAS COMPLEMENTED BY THE WHOLESALE DISCHARGE OF MOST CIVIL SERVANTS AND IN MANY CASES THEIR REPLACEMENT BY YOUNG UNPAID, AND INEXPERIENCED
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YOUTHS. ALTHOUGH THE DISCHARGED OFFICIALS LEFT QUIETLY, MOVING FROM THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDED HOUSING BACK TO THEIR VILLAGES AND SUBSISTING WITHOUT SALARY OR PENSION, THERE WAS BOUND TO BE A GREAT DEAL OF RESENTMENT AMONG THEM. (REFTEL). THE GENERALIZATION CAN BE DEFENDED THAT THIS COUP D' ETAT REPRESENTED A REVOLT OF THE ELDERS.

4. AS I AM NOT RESIDENT IN COMOROS, QUESTION OF US RECOGNITION SHOULD NOT PRESENT ITSELF IN ANY URGENT FASHION. WOULD APPRECIATE, HOWEVER, RECEIVING THE LATEST GENERAL GUIDANCE ON HOW WE HANDLE THIS QUESTION. SO FAR I SEE NOTHING IN THESE EVENTS WHICH SHOULD PREVENT GRADUAL ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH NEW GOVERNMENT, CONTINUED READINESS TO PROVIDE PL 480 FOOD AID, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ANY OTHER STEPS IN AID FIELD WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN DECIDED IN WASHINGTON IN CONNECTION WITH VISIT OF FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER MUZAWOIR ABDALLAH. ANY AID WE PROVIDE WOULD BE JUSTIFIED BY ECONOMIC NEEDS OF COUNTRY, NOT OF A PARTICULAR GOVERNMENT,

AND DESIRE TO STRENGTHEN HANDS OF MODERATES. THESE JUSTIFICATIONS SHOULD STILL BE VALID UNDER NEW GOVERNMENT.
BARRETT

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